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DIVERSITY IN RECRUITMENT EVIDENCE REVIEW

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June 2019

This evidence review provides Fire and Emergency NZ with a summary of 'good practice' for the design and implementation of interventions to increase diversity in applications and recruits.



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Diversity in Recruitment Evidence Review

Report prepared for
Fire and Emergency New Zealand

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April 2019

Contents

Context	1
Purpose	2
Background.....	2
One strand of a multi-faceted strategy.....	3
Angst in the ranks	3
Targets and quotas	4
Targeted Recruitment Campaigns.....	6
You can't be what you can't see.....	7
Development programs for young people.....	8
Girls Camps.....	8
Outcomes of girls camps	9
Not just girls	9
Recruitment processes	10
Community engagement	12
IFARES.....	12
Data and evaluation	13
References	15

Context

Purpose

This review provides Fire and Emergency New Zealand with a brief evidence summary of 'good practice' for the design and implementation of interventions to increase diversity in applications and recruitment.

A review of recent research literature and industry documents was undertaken to update a limited review already conducted by Fire and Emergency and to inform subsequent interviews. Documents and web-based information was retrieved from a wide range of fire services from Australia, the United Kingdom (U.K.), Canada, and United States (U.S.).

Interviews were conducted, in person or by phone, with eight individuals from comparable agencies, both in New Zealand and overseas. The agencies represented included Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW), Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES), and New Zealand Police.

Interviewees generously shared their experience and knowledge of diversity recruitment initiatives and approaches within their own organisations. The interviews explored:

- Strategies and programs that have been applied to increase diversity in recruitment
- The impact, both in terms of outcomes and data but also unintended consequences of the initiatives
- Factors contributing to success or failure of initiatives.

Background

Fire services worldwide are facing scrutiny over a lack of workforce diversity, with many facing legislative or regulatory mandates to address this issue (e.g. Andrews & Ashworth, 2018). In some cases this has been driven by complaints and reviews of sexual harassment and bullying in the workforce (e.g. Allison, 2014). In response, fire services are increasingly investing in recruitment and retention strategies for women and other under-represented groups.

Following years of Government austerity measures in the U.K., firefighter recruitment has, until recently, been very limited (Andrews & Ashworth, 2018). There is no national recruitment process, so each fire and rescue service (FRS) undertake their own recruitment campaigns as needed. These vary considerably in approach. While some FRSs have developed positive action policies and introduced recruitment initiatives, there has been only limited progress towards meeting targets for overall equality in employment (Clarke, 2018). Only 5.2% of firefighters in England are women, while just 3.9% come from an ethnic minority background (Local Government Association, 2018b). In response the government launched a new recruitment campaign in 2018 with the aim of making the service more reflective of communities across the country (Local Government Association, 2018c). It is too soon to assess how effective that has been.

The situation is similar in Australia where FRSs vary considerably in their approach to diversity recruitment. A recent case-study review of three Australian FRSs highlighted a number of issues with respect to diversity and inclusion (D&I) approaches generally (Young, et al., 2018). A lack of overall guiding framework and formal processes has meant that D&I initiatives have tended to be fragmented and reactive and increases in diversity have been 'organic', rather than planned (Young et al., 2018). In many cases diversity recruitment efforts are driven by externally mandated quotas or targets with some FRSs struggling with the challenges this presents (Interview data).

U.S. fire departments may be the most advanced in terms of diversity recruitment, however many initiatives there are relatively recent and the outcomes of these are yet to be fully assessed. Despite significant effort and commitment, even the larger fire departments such as New York (FDNY) and Los Angeles (LAFD) struggle to increase racial and gender diversity (Bendersky, 2018, Willing, 2017). As a result, career firefighting in the U.S. continues to be dominated by men (96%) who are white (82%) (Bendersky, 2018).

In many countries fire services appear to be well behind other agencies such as police in terms of diversity recruitment. Fire service initiatives tend to be relatively new, so long term results may not be seen for some time. This is especially true for programs that focus on young people, where the lead time from implementation of a program to potential recruitment of participants may be several years.

Most diversity recruitment initiatives focus on increasing numbers of female firefighters, yet the successful recruitment and retention of women remains an elusive goal for many career fire services (Schermerhorn-Collins, 2017). The lack of research means the complex reasons for this limited success remains unclear (Clarke, 2018).

Despite the increasing number of strategies and programs being developed and implemented, very little has been published specifically about diversity recruitment for fire services. Documents retrieved for this review are largely descriptive with anecdotal reports of the perceived benefits and outcomes of initiatives. There is a serious lack of formal evaluation of the strategies and programs that have been implemented to date.

Despite these limitations, useful information has been obtained about the strategies and programs implemented elsewhere. Several key 'themes' were identified in the documents and interviews, with a number of 'lessons learnt' being common across more than one agency. This report presents a synthesis of the key themes and the opinion of the author based on the best information available at this time.

One strand of a multi-faceted strategy

Diversity recruitment can only succeed when incorporated as part of a multi-faceted D&I strategy underpinned by effective change mechanisms.

Recruitment alone cannot be expected to drive lasting cultural change. It is not enough to simply recruit more diverse team members, that simply gets more 'difference' in the door (McLeod & Herrington, 2017). Recruits must be supported and developed in a psychologically safe and inclusive environment if they are to be retained and the potential of a truly diverse workforce is to be achieved (Mackintosh, 2018, McLeod & Herrington, 2017; Young et al, 2018).

"Expecting a simple shift in recruit numbers to 'do the hard work' of cultural change and organisational reform is unfair to women themselves, and devalues the importance of diversity in its broadest sense" (McLeod & Herrington, 2017, p.185).

Angst in the ranks

Resistance to diversity recruitment from within the organisation must be both expected and addressed. This is seldom done well, if at all. Even the best recruitment campaigns will be quickly undermined by rumours, misunderstanding and distrust from existing personnel.

In 2018, the London Fire Brigade (LFB) launched a new recruitment drive in an attempt to improve the proportion of women in their operational workforce (7.2%) and to attract more applicants from the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) and LGBT+ communities (Local Government Association, 2018a). A social media campaign, #FirefightingSexism was also launched to challenge the out-dated and inaccurate term 'firemen' with the term 'firefighters'. Within days it had gone viral on Twitter and Facebook. Despite internal communications explaining the aims and costs of the campaign, objections were raised about political correctness, lack of freedom of expression, and the waste of resources (Local Government Association, 2018a).

Change management initiatives often fail because of poor internal communication and the failure to adequately socialise impending changes. Clear and consistent messaging is needed ahead of, and alongside, wider recruitment campaigns. This is essential for existing personnel to understand the purpose and context of the drive for diversity, to dispel disruptive rumours and to generate authentic support.

The argument presented for increasing organisational diversity needs careful consideration and sensitive delivery. This is especially true where quotas and/or targets are used - the difference between these and the purpose they serve needs to be clearly understood and communicated. The discussion frequently focuses on gender, yet diversity is about much more than this.

While the common argument for increasing diversity is about better 'reflecting our community' a more useful approach might be to focus on reflecting the modern firefighter role and the different skill set that it requires. Firefighter is longer primarily about fighting fires, it increasingly involves medical first response as well as engaging with diverse communities for planning, preparedness and risk reduction. While firefighters still need courage, physical strength and aptitude, they also need intellectual, social, and emotional skills required to fulfil these roles.

Regardless of the business case or social change argument that is made for increasing diversity, recruitment initiatives should reflect clear organisational values and have strong leadership support at all levels.

Targets and quotas

The use of targets and/or quotas is a contentious issue. Proponents argue that these are essential drivers for diversity recruitment, that without them little progress will be made: "Quotas ensure sustained and systematic recruitment of women and, over time, lead to the normalisation of female firefighters" (Mackintosh, 2018, p.18). The introduction of a 50% gender quota for FRNSW recruit candidates in 2016 was billed as "a necessary and courageous step to affect demonstrable change" (FRNSW, 2018a, p.8).

Examples of targets and quotas in action:

- MFB set a target of 5% women by 2018, they achieved 3.5%.
- The U.K. Fire Vision 2024 sets a challenging target of 30% female firefighter recruitment nationally by 2024/5, and an expectation that individual FRNs will reflect the ethnic diversity of the community they serve.
- Despite notable backlash to its 2016 recruitment campaign, FRNSW achieved a 50/50 gender ratio for recruits. The ratio was not met in 2019 when the hottest January on record disproportionately impacted female candidates. The pass rate for the physical aptitude test

(PAT), which is usually around 95% for men and 35% for women, dropped to 26% for women.

- NZ Police have ambitious targets: By 2020, 50% of its recruits will be female, 30% will be Māori, 12% will be Asian, and 9% will be Pasifika (NZ Police, 2017).
- West Midlands Fire Service has set even more ambitious targets: By 2021, 60% of recruits will be women, and 35% will be from BAME groups (Yahoo news, 2019).

While quotas and gender targets have been attributed to a relatively high proportion of women in some fire services (Mackintosh, 2015; 2018), their use has been challenged by both men and women (McLeod & Herrington, 2017; Parkinson, Duncan & Archer, 2019).

The rejection of quotas by women is often underpinned by a fear of resentment and retribution from male colleagues (Parkinson, Duncan & Archer, 2019). For example, recruitment of women into the U.K. fire service resulted in negative reactions relating to the “potential disruption to norms, ways of working and social practices” (Andrew & Ashworth, 2018, p.148).

Claims of discrimination followed the launch of West Midlands Fire Service drive to recruit more women and BAME applicants. The accusations arose after it was revealed that different pass rates were applied on verbal and numerical tests for women and BAME candidates (60%) compared to the pass rate expected of white men (70%) (Yahoo news, 2019). When the London Fire Brigade (LFB) included a graduate entry program as part of their targeted recruitment, there was backlash from firefighters who resented those who entered via the accelerated program (Mackintosh, 2015).

Quotas contribute to a perception that increasing diversity dilutes the professionalism of the firefighter role; that women, and those from other under-represented groups, receive special treatment, that they are not ‘the best for the job’ (Parkinson, Duncan & Archer, 2019) and that ‘good blokes are missing out’ because of this.

“The sad fact is there are people sitting on fire engines today purely because of their gender or ethnicity” (Schow, A., 2019, p.1.).

Quotas or targets may be useful in the short-term to provide a focus for increasing the numbers of those currently under-represented and to serve as a benchmark for how well services reflect their local communities. Unfortunately, given the backlash against the ‘gender agenda’ (McLeod & Herrington, 2017) and a perception that diversity is overzealous political correctness, there is a real danger that the negative consequences of quotas and targets will undermine the ultimate goal of achieving a diverse and inclusive fire service.

This sentiment was expressed strongly by a number of interviewees with some suggesting that the use of quotas and targets is counter-productive. There also appears to be little, if any appetite for targets or quotas from fire service unions or associations. In response to increasing targeted recruitment in the U.K., the Fire Brigades Union expressed concern about the “danger of creating a hierarchy of equality if one minority is seen to be favoured above another” (Local Government Association, 2018a, p.21).

It is imperative, therefore, that wherever quotas or targets are used, they must be realistic and achievable, and they need strong leadership and infrastructure support. Before quotas or targets are implemented, processes must be in place to ensure that they are administered fairly and transparently without compromising performance standards. The reasoning behind their use must be effectively communicated across the organisation.

Targeted Recruitment Campaigns

Targeted recruitment is the most commonly used strategy to attract a greater number of diverse applicants, especially women. The focus, content, delivery mechanisms and outcomes of targeted recruitment varies considerably between countries and even between services within the same country. The range of activities used by fire services is extensive. A small sample includes, targeted marketing to sports clubs and gyms, career expos and open days, neighbourhood parties, concerts, attendance at community and sporting events, mobile recruiters, developing relationships with elite sports teams and organisations, and a wide range of media campaigns.

Using a variety of approaches and avenues, targeted recruitment campaigns and outreach efforts have tended to cast a 'wide net' in the belief that this will result in a greater pool of potential applicants. Fire services traditionally receive far more applications than they have places available. Sorting through the large number of applicants to identify the 'best candidates' is time consuming and costly. Simply casting a wider net and focusing primarily on increasing the number of applicants will fail in attracting a more diverse group.

Targeted recruitment can only succeed if it attracts the right type of applicant, rather than just more of the same. There is growing evidence that the make-up of an applicant pool is determined by how recruitment campaigns are conducted. For example, even small changes to how a job advertisement is framed can have a disproportionate effect on who applies (Linos & Reinhard, 2015).

The 'where' and 'how' of recruitment and outreach efforts is also important. It is important to be clear about who is being targeted in recruitment campaigns and to assess the most appropriate method and avenues for reaching these groups.

Using traditional channels and networks will succeed in increasing the number of traditional applicants. Some fire services believe that existing personnel are "our best recruiters" (Interview data). However using an existing workforce networks for recruitment may in fact exacerbate the lack of diversity. For example, women are less likely than their males to attribute joining the police to the fact they had family or friends who were police officers (Weill, 2019). Research has also shown that over one third of the difference in employment between black and white youth can be attributed to differences in the effectiveness of referrals from social networks (Linos & Reinhard, 2015).

To encourage more women into the service, LFB specifically targeted women in recruitment advertising, "including adverts in the Facebook newsfeed of women aged 18-40 in London who were interested in fitness and sports which require a great deal of upper body strength" (Local Government Association, 2018a, p. 43). The strategy was successful, with the highest percentage of female applicants over the campaign period.

LAFD have worked to develop effective messaging to target groups least represented in the department. Their 2018 recruitment campaign resulted in increased numbers (compared with 2016) in almost all underrepresented groups (data supplied). The campaign was both extensive and intensive with almost daily activity on social media, emails and other media, including:

- Public service Announcements (PSA) featuring LAFD women on local media stations and at major sporting fixtures.
- Marketing/Outreach with ESPN (Sports Radio)

- Focused advertising on social media platforms (Twitter, FB and Instagram) and websites, including spotlight videos highlighting female firefighters and career opportunities
- Local and community newspapers, magazines and journals featuring LAFD underrepresented groups
- A “commit to” campaign reflecting the organisation’s core values
- Presence at a Korean Press conference 2018
- Direct marketing via email (Interview data; LAFD, 2018)

Like fire services, many police departments focus significant resources on outreach and referral programs in an attempt to attract diverse candidates. The work of the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) across the U.S. suggest that while these approaches have merit, recruiters may not be looking in the right place for motivated candidates. Rather than outreach in targeted neighbourhoods, it may be more effective to target individuals who have already shown interest in public service (Weill, 2019).

The BIT research also highlighted the importance of understanding what motivates people to want to become a first responder. While the reasons are varied, recruitment campaigns tend to focus on a narrow set of motivational messages. In U.S. police recruitment advertisements, the focus tends to be on ‘service to community’ or ‘answering the call’. Advertising campaigns that emphasise other motivations are often more effective in soliciting applications (Weill, 2019). The failure to incorporate the motivations and perceived barriers of a broader range of potential firefighters represents a lost opportunity (Perrott, & Blenkarn, 2015).

A number of organisations use professional providers to run their recruitment campaigns. This is not always successful. After two years of using an external provider NSWFR have failed to increase the attraction rate for women. They recently sought tenders to develop a 5-10 year plan to attract more women, with a target of 25% of applications (Interview data).

You can’t be what you can’t see

The manner in which recruitment messages are framed and presented requires careful attention. A strong and consistent message from the interviews and industry documents is ‘you can’t be what you can’t see’.

For example, when the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) ran focus groups for their targeted populations (women, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians), they got strong feedback that people were uncertain of how they would be received because they saw few firefighters who looked like them (Mackintosh, 2015). The belief that people need to first see someone like them in a role before they are willing to choose an organisation (Kimborough, 2019) underpins the deliberate use of diverse images in many recruitment campaigns.

NZ police recruitment campaigns focus strongly on women and ethnic minorities. They actively promote diversity in their publications and on their social media with the use of images of uniformed staff with diverse ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, sexualities, and gender identities, as well as celebrating diversity on their Facebook and Instagram accounts. The Police have encouraged staff with diverse backgrounds to share their stories in the media, including a reality television series about female police officers (New Zealand Police, 2017).

A significant challenge is achieving a critical mass – how do you attract a more diverse group of applicants if the public image of firefighters does not resonate with them? To assist with this, a number of myths and assumptions that impede diversity recruitment must be challenged. A few examples from what could be a long list include:

- people from under-represented groups receive preferential treatment
- recruitment quotas results in a drop in standards because less capable people are being accepted
- women are not capable of the physical demands of a firefighting role
- diversity is all about gender (Young, et al., 2018).

Development programs for young people

There is a wide range of initiatives, grouped here as ‘youth development programs’ which target young people with the primary aim of eventually increasing the diversity of fire service applicants. The most common of these are ‘fire camps’ offered primarily for girls and young women.

Girls Camps

Girls Fire Camps have been around for a number of years and are growing in popularity in both the U.S. and Canada. The first Australian camp for girls was held in late 2018.

Girls camps in the U.S. (e.g. Camp Bailout, Camp Blaze , Camp Fully Involved, CampHERO, Camp Ignite, Phoenix Firecamp, and Portland Metro Fire Camp) vary in their format, business model and time frame. They include one day, weekend, overnight, or daytime only events. Many involve collaboration among several fire departments and/or partnerships with other agencies such as police and ambulance services.

The all-girl camps expose girls and young women to a career they may not otherwise consider. Participants are shown what it takes to be a firefighter, but also given the opportunity to develop personal skills. They learn about “fire behaviour, fire service history, physical fitness, nutrition, CPR and fire extinguishers but more importantly they learn about pushing past limits, encouraging each other and working as a team” (<https://www.i-women.org/firefighters/fire-camps/>).

In Canada, Camp FFIT (Female Firefighters in Training) was developed by Ottawa Fire Services as one of a number of grass-roots recruitment activities targeted to groups with low applicant rates. With the support of Fire Service Women Ontario (FSWO), Camp FFIT has helped create similar camps across Canada as well as related programs in the U.S. (<https://www.fswoc.ca/camp-ffit>).

Camp FFIT aims to make young women aware of the physical, mental and emotional challenges of a fire service career. The curriculum is based on a simplified and shortened version of that found in professional fire departments, including physical fitness training, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus) instruction, and fire ground skills such as ventilation, search and rescue, hose control, proper carrying techniques and use of ladders, extrication, rappelling and tying knots (<https://www.fswoc.ca/camp-ffit>).

In Australia, Girls On Fire was founded by Bronnie Mackintosh (FRNSW) after her travels as a Churchill Fellow in 2016. Her trip highlighted the role of Girls Fire Camps in the U.S. as a way of introducing young women to the firefighting and emergency services. The organisation ran the inaugural Girls Fire and Emergency Services (GFES) Camp in late 2018 with the aim of “teaching young women (aged 15 to 17) firefighting and emergency services skills and to educate them about

the wide variety of jobs in the services, encouraging them to consider a career or voluntary position in this field” (<https://www.girlsonfire.com.au/about>)

As with the U.S. and Canadian camps, the GFES camp involved multi-agency collaboration and aimed to development participant’s confidence, resilience, problem-solving, teamwork, leadership skills and to test their physical limits.

Outcomes of girls camps

Girls camps are seen as a positive social change tool with a “significant impact on changing the perceptions and attitudes about the role of firefighters and women performing it” (Mackintosh, 2015, p. 61.) Participants acquire new mental and physical skills, and by overcoming challenges, can increase their confidence and self-esteem.

Benefits are also reported for the volunteers who staff the camps, both in terms of personal satisfaction and development, as well as career-building experience (Mackintosh, 2015).

“Volunteers all cited personal gains in the form of satisfaction, community contribution and soft skill developments in communications, teaching and group dynamics. Almost all cited professional gains in leadership, team-based skills, networking and confidence in their own capabilities” (Mackintosh, 2015, p. 64).

Such positive outcomes of girls camps have only been reported anecdotally. There is a lack of empirical research that examines the direct relationship between camp participation and fire service recruitment. Aware of this short coming, Girls On Fire has formed a research partnership with Monash University to evaluate the impacts and outcomes for both camp participants and leaders (Mackintosh, 2015).

Regardless of the duration, location, or approach of the girl’s fire camps, they have a common aim: to bring more women into the fire service (Kimbrough, 2019). The extent to which this is achieved is unproven: we are yet to see if participation in such camps translates into greater diversity in the fire service.

It has been noted that, while programs such as CampFFIT may have contributed to an increase in the number of women in college pre-service firefighting programs in Canada, number of female operational firefighters still remains insignificant overall (Wilcox, 2018).

Some of those interviewed for this review question the utility of school-age programs and girls camps in particular. While they see the value of the camps as a tool for changing attitudes and beliefs about the role of women in traditionally male dominated careers, they question the return on the investment of resources and time in terms of diversity recruitment outcomes.

There is also a concern that in some areas, camp participants reflect a narrow, largely white, section of the community.

Not just girls

Not all programs targeting young people and exposing them to firefighting as a potential career have a girls-only focus. The National Junior Firefighter Program (NVFC) serves as an umbrella for junior firefighter programs across the U.S. It provides fire and emergency services with resources and tools to help them develop and grow local youth programs. Based on the premise that youth involvement fosters the next generation of first responders, the program is seen as a powerful recruitment tool for services (<https://www.nvfc.org/programs/national-junior-firefighter-program/>). Again empirical evidence showing the effectiveness of such programs as diversity recruitment tools is lacking.

LAFD Youth Programs

In partnership with City Council Districts, LAFD run a number of youth programs providing summertime/after school development training and recruitment opportunities for underrepresented students in local communities. Various levels of instruction are offered, from introductory camps and orientations to more focused firefighting instruction and training. The biggest challenge to ensuring effective, standardized programs for youth participating in these programs is staffing (LAFD, 2018a)

- **High school magnet program**, in partnership with five high schools, provides career opportunity information and hands on experience to develop skills, knowledge, and abilities to prepare and understand what is required to become a Firefighter. Provides a pathway into other LAFD Youth programs. 191 participated in 2017.
- **Youth F.I.R.E. Program (YFP)** for young people (14-18) runs over 7 to 8 consecutive Saturdays for six hours. YFP provides an introduction to the role of firefighting and hands on experience of technical competencies. It develops communication, leadership, and life skills through LAFD mentors as positive role models. YFP serves as a pathway into the Cadet Program. 147 participated in 2017.
- **Fire Cadet program** is designed for young people (14 – 20). Following an introductory 5-day orientation program, the Cadet is assigned to a cadet post where they work alongside LAFD on station to learn and gain practical experience in first aid, basic firefighting skills, tools and equipment maintenance, community relations, and fire prevention. IN 2017 there were 130 cadets across 13 Cadet posts.
- **Girls camps** - Twice yearly 2-day introductory fire camps are held for girls (14-18). The goal is to instil confidence, leadership and courage while providing awareness of a potential career in the fire service. The camps include interactive exercises with power tools, ladders, hose lines and extinguishers; basic first aid and CPR training; physical fitness and team building. 123 participated (220 registered) in 2017-18.

Recruitment processes

Applicant evaluation processes, such as the composition of interview panels and the type of questions used, can influence outcomes for applicants from diverse backgrounds (Clarke, 2018; Kimbrough, 2019; Parkinson, Duncan & Archer, 2019). Both written and physical assessments can be a source of bias against women and applicants from other underrepresented groups, resulting in a loss of desired applicants (Miller, et al., 201). Skills and merit based assessment of candidates must be applied by eliminating unconscious bias and removing structural barriers (Parkinson, Duncan & Archer, 2019).

Assessment should also be relevant to the modern firefighting role. A common sentiment among existing firefighters is, "I don't care if you're black, white, female, male, or polka-dot. All I care about is if you can do the job" (Bendersky, 2018, p.1.). However this sentiment is based on the belief that the primary skills for firefighting are based on strength and physicality, when in fact, successful firefighters must embody a more complex mix of characteristics and skills (Bendersky, 2018).

This belief in performance-based meritocracy, combined with stereotypes about women's relative lack of physical strength and stamina, have contributed to the belief that fire services have lowered their standards to accommodate female firefighters, and thereby, undermined the integrity and safety of fire service (Bendersky, 2018).

Recognising the importance of recruitment processes, a number of fire services have reviewed and modified these to ensure that they are more transparent, fair and equitable. After investigating different testing approaches, the Madison fire department introduced video-based testing and like Portland and others, ensures that interview panels are representative and inclusive of members of the community (Kimbrough, 2019).

Defending the use of a 50/50 gender recruitment quota, FRNSW note that "only meritorious women are advanced to recruitment" (FRNSW, 2018a). Transparent, validated selection processes are essential to demonstrate that successful applicants have earned their place on merit. To this end, FRNSW use a blind selection process and include operational firefighters and a union delegate on the selection board. Contact is maintained with unsuccessful candidates, and all have the opportunity to re-sit the assessment (Interview data).

There are also programs designed to assist applicants to prepare for the recruitment process and to support them through it. Many of these focus on improving educational and fitness preparedness.

NZ Police are trialling a voluntary program in Auckland where applicants work with a personal trainer to develop a Fitness Improvement Plan (FIP). While it is too soon to judge the program's effectiveness, results look promising (Interview data).

Moving away from a narrow focus on physical capability, the Gloucestershire FRS introduced a recruitment and selection strategy in 2018 that emphasises candidates' personal strengths and values. This approach resulted in a diverse group of 15 candidates, eight of them female (Local Government Association, 2018a). The FRS revised the evaluation process that traditionally focussed on assessing applicants' physical strength and manual dexterity. Under the 'recruiting for values and training for skills' strategy, assessment now includes a mental agility test, group discussion and team work (Local Government Association, 2018a).

From its 2017 recruitment drive, the first in nearly 10 years, West Yorkshire FRS received 700 applications from women (12%) and more than 600 from BAME groups (11%) (Local Government Association, 2018a). Unfortunately many of those applicants failed to make it through the assessment process. Data analysis revealed a disproportionate failure rate among BAME candidates in the situational judgement test and among female candidates at the physical assessment (Local Government Association, 2018a). In response, the 'nearly there' strategy was introduced in 2018. Unsuccessful BAME candidates are invited to participate in training sessions to help them prepare to apply in the second year of the recruitment drive. Women who failed the physical assessment were invited to meet with the training team at HQ and individualised physical training plans were devised for them. Applications to the second recruitment round will be monitored to assess the success of these interventions (Local Government Association, 2018a).

LAFD offers a variety of preparatory programs for firefighter candidates, including informational seminars, Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT), Orientation and Practice Program, Oral Interview Preparation Program, Candidate Advancement Program (CAP) and the Applicant Orientation Program (AOP). LAFD personnel regard the CAP as one of their best programs. The physical fitness program was designed by firefighters to develop both strength and conditioning in a similar training environment to that found in the fire academy. All LAFD candidates are encouraged to participate in the free program because there is a clear link between those who make the greatest improvements in CAPS and subsequent success at the training academy (Interview data).

In 2005 a course was established as a joint venture between NZ Police and Unitec to attract more Pacific Islanders into the force. It has since been redeveloped to attract more Asian participants and

recently Unitec and Te Wananga o Aotearoa have combined to run a similar programme for Maori. These Preparatory courses provide opportunities for potential Police recruits who might otherwise struggle with aspects of the selection process.

A number of fire services also mentor and support candidates throughout the various stages of the selection process. This might include one-one mentoring to provide encouragement and direction to candidates, especially those re-sitting assessments or by directing them to preparation programs.

Like Fire and Emergency, NZ Police have a single national training centre. Recognising that the four-month relocation to Porirua was a barrier for many potential recruits, they recently introduced an Auckland training option. While the initiative was gender neutral, there was an assumption that this would be particularly attractive to women. It soon became clear that it was just as attractive to young dads (Interview data).

Community engagement

All fire services and police departments examined as part of this review report active involvement in a wide range of events that engage or support diverse communities.

For example FRNSW supports sexual and gender diverse communities through participation in events such as the Sydney Mardi Gras, annual Pride Week Celebrations, IDAHOBT Day, and Wear It Purple Day. Through the Community Engagement Unit, FRNSW works with groups such as the Muslim Women's Association, as well as migrant and refugee communities (Young, et al., 2018).

The primary purpose of such engagement activities is to form and grow authentic relationships that encourage knowledge sharing and to improve fire safety in vulnerable communities (Young, et al. 2018a). While this is vital for work of agencies such as police, fire and emergency services to build 'trust and confidence' the value to diversity recruitment is unclear.

Having tracked where applicants indicate their interest, NZ Police found a low match between applications and attendance at such events. For example, only four applications followed the Big Day Out, despite a huge Police presence (Interview data). They have found that more successful initiatives appear to be those that are more deliberately targeted, such as Police recruitment open days held across 50 stations with a focus on women (Interview data).

IFARES

The Indigenous Fire and Rescue Employment Strategy (IFARES) from New South Wales (NSW) has been hailed as a best-practice example for those working to improve Indigenous participation in the emergency services workforce (Braidner, Lindsay & Spek, 2018; Young, et al., 2018).

The IFARES program was initiated by aboriginal firefighters in response to a challenge from elders to get more of 'our fellas' as 'you fellas' (Interview data). The program was developed and led by members of the Aboriginal community in collaboration with TAFE NSW and FRNSW.

The aim of IFARES is to enhance workplace skills for members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Those who successfully complete the program receive a Certificate in Fitness, a qualification supporting potential employment in fitness related careers. In 2017-18, 27 participants received the Certificate with 5 participants gaining employment as firefighters after graduating from the FRNSW State Training College (FRNSW, 2018b). Four participants have gained positions within the ACT Emergency Service (FRNSW, 2018b).

IFARES has successfully increased Aboriginal workforce participation in FRNSW from 2% in 2011 to over 3.6% in 2018 (FRNSW, 2018b). As a result of the program, FRNSW has employed 49 permanent firefighters and 1 administrative person (Braidner, Lindsay & Spek, 2018). In addition, the program has enabled Aboriginal people from across NSW to take valuable leadership and mentor roles within their community (Braidner, Lindsay & Spek, 2018).

It is clear that FRNSW personnel and those involved in the program are proud of what IFARES has achieved. The factors seen as pivotal to this success include:

Partnership: IFARES was developed from within the community with little corporate involvement. FRNSW supports the program but does not manage or drive it.

Community: IFARES participants maintain strong connections to their culture and communities.

Merit: there are no compromises to recruitment processes and standards for IFARES candidates.

Mentorship: experienced Firefighters (not only Indigenous Firefighters) mentor and guide IFARES candidates through all aspects and stages of the hands-on program.

Strong, positive relationships are vital for fire services working with diverse communities, but many acknowledge gaps in this area. Recognising challenges in their relationship with the Indigenous community, such as fire trucks being stoned when attending some residential areas, FRNSW piloted a creative initiative in 2018. As part of a wider Indigenous Partnership Strategy, fire trucks in the North West Slopes now display Indigenous art designs.



Close consultation with the Aboriginal community ensured that the fire trucks with their symbolically important Indigenous artwork, were well received (ABC News, 2018).

Similarly in February 2018 NZ Police unveiled a one-of-a-kind rainbow painted police car for the annual Pride festival in Wellington and Auckland. The rainbow car was "intended as a visible representation of the force's commitment to diversity" (Stuff, 2018). However members of the LGBT+ community challenged the authenticity of the initiative fearing that it was merely a two week publicity stunt (Matheson, 2018). Due to the popularity and positive feedback about the car, the rainbow livery has been kept.

The responses to these two initiatives highlights the importance of authentic community involvement and partnerships. Initiatives that are seen as tokenistic are counter-productive and do little to effect positive change.

Data and evaluation

Diversity recruitment initiatives and testing processes must be continually measured and monitored to evaluate their impact, to understand barriers to success, and to support ongoing recruitment efforts (Mackintosh, 2018; Parkinson, Duncan & Archer, 2019).

Fire departments in the U.S. appear to be more advanced in developing and maintaining information and monitoring systems, with data collected on many aspects of the recruitment, hiring and training processes.

For example, LAFD monitors and analyses recruitment activities through a number of databases: social media, recruitment contact, recruitment outreach events and after event actions, preparatory programs, and mentoring relationships.

NZ Police use a data analytic company to record data on applicants and their success as they progress through recruitment and training. They found that success, from application to entering police college, is highly correlated with Socio-Economic Status. This is likely to be associated with differences in access to the time and resources needed to prepare for the assessment process (Interview data). This data highlights the importance of targeting interventions effectively.

For example, NZ Police attend school career events and trialled a new school program for year 13 students in 2018. In both cases, the selection of participating schools is deliberate and data-driven to ensure that the targeted schools have high numbers of underrepresented groups (Interview data).

The U.K. Inclusive Fire Service group is working on producing guidance on benchmarking data. This should be useful as fire services consider how best to monitor and assess diversity recruitment initiatives.

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